



## Newark Becomes First Municipality in New Jersey to Issue Identification Cards

*Immigrant communities cheer passage of City Council ordinance establishing Newark Identification card program to benefit undocumented immigrants, the homeless, and other vulnerable communities*

### For Immediate Release

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NEWARK – The largest city in the state of New Jersey, with over 280,000 residents, has approved an ordinance to create a municipal identification card program for all city residents, making it the first municipality in New Jersey to do so. The Newark Municipal Council voted today by a unanimous vote to create a city-issued ID eligible to all residents aged 14 and older. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka is expected to sign the ordinance soon.

The municipal ID card will benefit all residents of Newark, including marginalized communities such as immigrants, people with disabilities, the young and elderly, formerly-incarcerated people, the homeless, and transgender individuals.

“Newark’s ID card program is a bold step forward for public safety and civil rights,” said American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey Public Policy Director Ari Rosmarin. “It will help ensure all city residents have equal access to basic services and police protection. Newark’s tremendous leadership in promoting compassion and advancing justice should inspire municipalities across the state to follow its lead. We look forward to continuing to work with Newark to ensure that all residents—regardless of immigration status, gender identity, age, criminal history, or housing status—are able to use their Newark IDs to protect their rights and improve their lives.”

While Newark is the first municipality in the state to issue this form of identification, other cities around the country, including New Haven, New York City, and San Francisco, have instituted similar programs.

Highlights of the ID program include:

- Identity and residency documentation requirements accessible to most Newark residents aged 14 and over;
- Valid proof of identification when interacting with all city agencies and departments, including the Newark Police Department, public schools, and Health & Community Wellness;
- Applicant confidentiality protections, including for domestic violence victims;
- Plans to work with local banks to permit cardholders to open and close bank accounts, as well as plans to encourage card acquisition for prescription discount, and discounts on admission to local museums and other attractions and businesses;
- Anti-fraud design;
- Accessible application fee, with fee waivers for homeless and poor Newarkers.

“This is a good day for Newark residents who are already part of our communities but lack documentation,” said Kevin Brown, 32BJ Vice President and New Jersey State Director. “Newark’s Municipal ID program will give immigrants, the homeless and other disenfranchised Newarkers more opportunities to improve their lives and build a bright future for their families.”

This form of identification provides peace of mind to residents in the city who are unable to obtain other forms of identification, including undocumented immigrants.

"The municipal IDs are a great step towards justice for immigrants, who work so hard but often need to stay in the shadows of fear," said Rev. Moacir Weirich, pastor of St. Stephen's Grace Community Church and a member of Faith In New Jersey. "With the IDs people will feel more secure and welcomed into our community where they live, work, and contribute."

Lacking a government-issued identification can discourage people from contacting police to report crimes or from participating as witnesses in criminal investigations. Victims of crimes are less likely to be identified, which can also hinder notification of their loved ones.

“The members and supporters of NJ Communities United applaud Mayor Baraka as he takes this step to ensure economic opportunities and public safety for immigrant families in Newark,” said Trina Scordo, Executive Director, New Jersey Communities United. “It is our hope that Newark will be the model for municipalities across the state in establishing human rights and dignity for immigrant communities.”

The most common form of government-issued identification is a driver’s license. Both driver’s licenses and non-driver state identification cards require proof of immigration status, preventing undocumented immigrants from obtaining them. Immigrants living in Newark will now be eligible to use a combination of documents verified by the City to obtain an official ID and use it in their everyday lives in Newark.

“We applaud the Mayor, the Council and the Mayor’s Office of International Affairs and Diaspora’s leadership,” said Alix Nguetack, Detention Program Coordinator, American Friends Service Committee. “This policy recognizes the fact that New Jersey is the state with the third largest immigrant population and that much of this population resides in the New York-Newark-Jersey City metropolitan area.”

The New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice launched a campaign in March, [New Jersey For All](#), which aims to advance policies that address the lack of government-issued identification in the immigrant community, wage theft, the need for expanded access to driver’s licenses, and the separation of immigrant families. The Alliance views the passage of a municipal ID ordinance in Newark to be a great first step in the growing momentum from immigrant communities organizing to make New Jersey a more immigrant-friendly state.

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